

EYES OPENED

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A SERMON
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AT WESTBOURNE GROVE CHAPEL, BAYSWATER.

“And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.”
Genesis 21:19.

“And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”
Luke 24:31.

THE fall of man was most disastrous in its results to our entire being. “In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die,” was no idle threat; for Adam did die the moment that he transgressed the command—he died the great spiritual death by which all his spiritual powers became then and evermore, until God should restore them, absolutely dead. I said all the *spiritual* powers, and if I divide them after the analogy of the senses of the body, my meaning will be still clearer. Through the fall the spiritual *taste* of man became perverted so that he puts bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter; he chooses the poison of hell and loathes the bread of heaven; he licks the dust of the serpent and rejects the food of angels. The spiritual *hearing* became grievously injured, for man naturally no longer hears God’s Word, but stops his ears at his Maker’s voice. Let the gospel minister charm ever so wisely, yet the unconverted soul, like the deaf adder, hears not the charmer’s voice. The spiritual feeling by virtue of our depravity is fearfully deadened. That which would once have filled the man with alarm and terror no longer excites emotion. Even the spiritual *smell* with which man should discern between that which is pure and holy, and that which is unsavory to the Most High has become defiled, and now man’s spiritual nostrils, while unrenewed, derive no enjoyment from the sweet savor which is in Christ Jesus, but seeks after the putrid joys of sin. As with other senses so is it with man’s *sight*. He is so spiritually blind that things most plain and clear he cannot and will not see. The understanding, which is the soul’s eye, is covered with scales of ignorance, and when these are removed by the finger of instruction, the visual orb is still so affected that it only sees men as trees walking.

Our condition is thus most terrible, but at the same time it affords ample room for a display of the splendors of divine grace. Dear friends, we are so naturally and entirely ruined, that if saved, the whole work must be of God, and the whole glory must crown the head of the Triune Jehovah. If, indeed, the spiritual eyesight is dim, it is not sufficient for the Lord to open a fountain as He did in Hagar’s case; it is not enough for Christ to come and walk with men as He did in the case of the disciples; our eyes must be opened, or else Hagar will die of thirst with the fountain unseen at her feet, and the disciples will still be pining in sadness after their Savior when that Savior is sitting at the table breaking bread with them. There must not only be a Christ lifted up of whom it can be said, “There is life in a look at the crucified One,” but that very look itself must be given to us, or else in vain should Christ hang upon the cross; there shall be no salvation by His death to us.

I. Taking HAGAR’S CASE first, I shall address myself this morning to certain unconverted ones who are in a hopeful condition.

1. Taking Hagar’s case as the model to work upon, we may see in her and in many like her *preparedness for mercy*. In many respects she was in a fit state to become an object of mercy’s help. She had a *strong sense of need*. The water was spent in the bottle, she herself was ready to faint, and her child lay at death’s door; and this sense of need was attended by *vehement desires*. It is a very hard thing to bring a sinner to long after Christ; so hard, that if a sinner does really long and thirst after Jesus, the Spirit of God must have been secretly at work in his soul, begetting and fostering those desires. When the invita-

tion is given, “Ho, everyone who thirsts,” you can honestly say, “That means me.” That precious gospel invitation, “Whoever will, let him come,” is evidently yours, for you do will eagerly and vehemently. The Searcher of all hearts knows that there is no objection in your heart either to be saved or to the way of being saved; no, rather you sometimes lift your hands to heaven and say, “O God! Would that I might say, ‘Christ for me!’” You know that the water of life is desirable; you know more than that, you pine with an inward desire to drink of it. Your soul is now in such a state that if you do not find Jesus you never will be happy without Him. Like Toplady you sing—

*“I will not be comforted
Till Jesus comforts me.”*

God has brought you into such a condition that you are like the magnetized needle which has been turned away from the pole by the finger of some passerby, and it cannot rest until it gets back to its place. Your constant cry is, “Give me Christ! Give me Christ, or else I die!” This is hopeful, but let me remind you that it alone will not save you. The discovery of a leak in a vessel may be preparatory to the pumping of the ship, and to the repair of the leak; but the discovery of the leak will not of itself keep the boat afloat. The fact that you have a fever is well for you to know, but to groan under that fever will not restore you to health. To desire after Christ is a very blessed symptom, but mere desires will not bring you to heaven. You may be hungering and thirsting after Christ, but hungering and thirsting will not save you; you must have Christ, for your salvation does not lie in your hungering and thirsting, nor in your humbling, nor in your praying—salvation is in Him who died upon the cross—and not anything in you. Yet these are hopeful signs, and so far I am thankful.

Like Hagar you are *humbled, and brought to despair*. There was a time when you did not admit your need of a Savior; you found comfort enough in ceremonies, and in your own prayers, repentances, and so on. But now the water is spent in your bottle, and you are sitting down with Hagar wringing your hands and weeping in despair—a blessed despair! God bring you all to it! Despair is next door to confidence in Christ. Rest assured until we are empty, Jesus will never fill us; until we are stripped He will never clothe us; until self is dead Christ will not live in us.

It is quite certain that in Hagar’s case *the will* was right enough with reference to the water. It would have been preposterous, indeed, to say to Hagar, “If there is water are you willing to drink?” “Willing?” she would say, “look at my parched lips, hear my dolorous cries, look at my poor panting, dying child; how can you ask a mother if she is willing to have water while her baby is perishing for thirst?” And so with you; if I were to propose to you the question, “Are you willing to be saved?” you might look me in the face and say, “Willing? Oh sir, I have long passed beyond that stage! I am panting, groaning, thirsting, fainting, and dying to find Christ. If He would come to me this morning I would not only open both the gates of my heart and say, ‘Come in,’ but the gates are opened now before He comes; and my soul is saying, ‘Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might even come to His seat!’” All this is hopeful, but I must again remind you that to will to be rich does not make a man rich, and that to will to be saved cannot in itself save you. Panting after health does not restore the sick man though it may set him upon using the means, and so he may be healed; and with you, your panting after salvation cannot save you—you must get beyond all this to the great Physician Himself.

2. In the second place, *mercy was prepared* for Hagar, and is prepared for those in a like state. *There was water*. She thought it was a wilderness without a drop for her to drink, but there was water. Troubled Conscience, there is pardon. You think it is all judgment, thunder and thunderbolts, curses and wrath, but it is not so. There is mercy. Jesus died. God is able justly to forgive sinners. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. He is a God ready to pardon, ready to forgive! There is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared. There is water, there is mercy. What is more, there is *mercy for you*. There is not only that general mercy which we are bound to preach to every creature, but for many of you whom I have described, I am persuaded that there is special mercy. Your names are in His book; He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world, though you do not know it. You shall be His—you ARE His. The hour is not far distant, when, washed in the fountain and made clean, you shall cast yourselves at the Savior’s feet, and be His captives in the

bonds of love forever. *There is mercy for you now*, if you trust Jesus. The water was not created as a new thing to supply Hagar's thirst, it was there already. *If* she could have seen it she might have had it before, but she could not see it. There is mercy, there is mercy for you. All that is needed is that you should see it, poor troubled conscience, and if you could have seen it, there would have been no necessity whatever that you should have been so long a time as you have been in despair, and doubt, and fear.

The water was near to Hagar; and so is Christ near to you, my dear friend, this morning. The mercy of God is not a thing to be sought for up yonder among the stars, or to be discovered in the depths—it is near you, it is even in your mouth and in your heart. The Savior who walked along the streets of Jerusalem is in these aisles and in these pews this morning; a God ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious. Do not think of my Master as though He had gone up to heaven out of your reach, and had left no mercy behind Him. Let me tell you that He is as near in spirit now as He was to the disciples when He spoke to them at Emmaus. Oh that you could see Him! He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” He is passing by; cry to Him, you blind man, and you shall receive your sight! Call to Him, you deaf! Speak; even you whose lips are dumb, His ears can hear your soul's desires. He is near; only believe in His presence, and trust His grace, and you shall see Him; but remember, that your seeing Him will not create the Savior nor the salvation; the Savior is here already, and the salvation is even now finished—but your seeing Him by faith will give you joy and comfort. The water in Hagar's case was not only near, *but it was accessible*. She took the bottle and she dipped it in the stream, and filled it to the brim, and gave some to the child to drink. Poor awakened sinner, mercy is within your reach. God the Holy Spirit has placed you where mercy is within your immediate reach. It is a notion abroad that the act of faith is very mysterious. Now faith, so far as it is an act of man, (and an act of man it most certainly is, as well as the gift of God, for “with the heart *men* believe”), is one of the simplest acts of the human intellect. To trust Jesus, to lean with the soul upon Him, just as with my body I am leaning on this rail; to make Him all my confidence and all my rest, needs no learning, no previous education, needs no straining or mental effort. It is such an action that the baby and the suckling may glorify God by it. The faith of Sir Isaac Newton, with all his learning, is not a whit more saving or less simple than the faith of the child of three years old, if brought to rest on Christ alone. The moment the dying thief looked to the crucified and said, “Lord remember me,” he was as saved as Paul when he could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course.” You are saved the *moment* you trust Christ.

I am very anxious to be understood, and therefore I am trying to speak very simply, and to talk right home to those whom I am driving at. My own case is to the point. I was for some few years, as a child, secretly seeking Jesus. If ever heart knew what the bitter anguish of sin was, I did, and when I came to understand the plan of salvation by the simple teaching of a plain, illiterate man, the next thought I had after joy that I was saved, was this—“What a fool I was not to trust Jesus Christ before!” I concluded that I never could have heard the gospel, but I think I was mistaken. I think I must have heard the gospel thousands of times, but did not understand it. I was like Hagar with my eyes closed. We are bound to tell you every Sunday that trusting Jesus Christ is the way of salvation, but after you have heard that 50,000 times, you really will not even understand what we mean by it till the Spirit of God reveals the secret; but when you do but know it and trust in Jesus, simply as a child would trust his father's word, you will say of yourself, “How could it be? I was thirsty with the water rippling at my feet. I was famishing and perishing for hunger, and the bread was on the table in front of me. I was fretting as though there were no entrance into heaven, but there stood the door wide open right before me, if I could but have seen it!” Trust yourself to Christ to save you, and He must save you; He never refused to save a single trustful spirit. No, I will improve upon it: “Trust Him, *you are saved*.” The moment you begin to live by faith in His dear Son, there is not a sin left in God's book against you.

3. We pass on, then, in the third place to notice that although Hagar was prepared and mercy was prepared, *yet there was an impediment in the way*, for she could not see the water. There is also an impediment in your way. Hagar had a pair of bright beaming eyes, I will be bound to say, and yet she could not see the water; and men may have first-rate understandings, but not understand that simple thing—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You do not suffer so much from lack of power to understand faith as from

a kind of haze which hovers over your eyes to prevent their looking into the right place. You continue to imagine that there must be something very singular for us to feel in order to have Eternal life. Now this is all a mistake! Simple trust in Jesus has this difficulty in it that it is not difficult, and therefore the human mind refuses to believe that God can intend to save us by so simple a plan. What blindness is this! So foolish and so fatal! Is not this ignorance partly caused by *legal terrors*? Master Bunyan, who had a keen insight into spiritual experience, says that Christian was so troubled with the burden on his back, that in running he did not look well enough to his steps. Therefore, being much tumbled up and down in his own mind, as he says, he also tumbled into the Slough of Despond. You may have heard the thunder of God's law so long that you cannot hear anything so soft and sweet as the invitation of the loving Jesus. "Come and welcome! Come and welcome!" is unheard because of the din of your sins.

The main reason I think, however, why some do not attain early to peace is because they are *looking for more than they will get*, and thus their eyes are dazzled with fancies. You have been reading of somebody's life, and you have said, "I should like to feel like that man," so you will one of these days, but you must not hope to be like that man before you are saved. You who dare not take Christ because you are not a full-grown Christian, be content to be a baby first; be satisfied to go through the seed state, and the blade state, and the ear state, and then you will get to be the full corn in the ear. Be content to begin with Christ and with Christ, alone. I verily believe some of you expect that you will experience a great shock, or a superhuman delirium of horror. You have an idea that to be born-again is something to make the flesh creep or the bones shiver—an indescribable sensation, quite out of the compass of human feeling. Now believe me, that to be born-again involves the ending of superstition and living by feeling, and brings you into the world of plain and simple truth where fools need not err. "Whoever believes in Him is not condemned." If you can understand that and claim it as your own, you are born-again; but though you should understand all human mysteries, if you are not born-again you could not truly understand that simplest of all teachings, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved."

Again, I am afraid some persons with the water at their feet, do not drink it because of the *bad directions* that are given by ministers. When a minister closes up an address to the unconverted with this exhortation—"Now, my dear friends, go home and pray," that is a very right exhortation; but it is given to the wrong people, and in the wrong place. I do not say to you this morning, I *dare* not say to you, as though it were the gospel message, "Go home and pray." I hope you will pray! But there is another matter to come before prayer, namely, *faith in Jesus*. When Christ told His disciples to go and preach the gospel to every creature, He did not say to them, "He that prays shall be saved," though that would be true if he prayed aright, but Christ said, "He who *believes* shall be saved." Your present duty is not praying, but *believing*. You are to look to Jesus Christ upon the cross just as the poor serpent-bitten Israelites looked to the bronze serpent and lived. Your praying will not do you a farthing's worth of good if you refuse to trust Jesus Christ. When you have trusted Jesus Christ, prayer will become your breath, your native air—you will not be able to live without it; but prayer, if put in the place of a child-like trust in Jesus, becomes an antichrist. It is not going to places of worship, or Bible reading which saves. I am not depreciating these duties, but I am putting them in their proper position. It is depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone which is the true vital act by which the soul is quickened into spiritual life. If you, trusting in Christ, do not find peace and pardon, the gospel which I preach is a lie, and I will renounce it; but then the Bible would be false, also, for it is from that Book my message comes. This is the gospel which we have received, and which Christ has sent us to preach—that whoever believes in Him is not condemned.

Now why do you hurry about after this and that? Why follow this man's and that man's directions? Why look to your baptism and confirmation? Why do you go about to your church-goings and your chapel-goings, your Bible-readings, and your praying, your good works about this and about the other—they are all but dross and dung if you put them in the place of Christ! But Christ Jesus, if you rest on Him, is precious, and after you receive Him, your works and your prayers shall become precious too, because they will be performed through faith in Him; but until you come to Him, they are all nothing

and vanity, unacceptable in the sight of God, because you put them into the place which should be occupied by the Savior.

4. I feel certain that there are some here upon whom the Lord intends to work this morning—so we will speak, in the fourth place, upon *the divine removal of the impediment*. Hagar's blindness was removed *by God*. No one else could have removed it. God must open a man's eyes to understand practically what belief in Jesus Christ is. That simple truth of God—salvation by trust in Jesus Christ—still remains a point too difficult to be seen; until the whole power of Omnipotence is made to bear upon the intellect, man does not really comprehend it. But while this was divinely removed, it *was removed instrumentally*. An angel spoke out of heaven to Hagar. It matters little whether it is an angel or a man—it *is the Word of God* which removes the difficulty. Dear friend, I pray that the Word of God may remove your unbelief. May you see today the light of Jesus Christ by simply trusting Him. I believe there are some who are saved who still are afraid they will be lost; I have heard of a butcher who at his work was accustomed to put his candle in a little candlestick which was tied by a belt around his forehead. One day he needed his candle in his hand, and he looked all around his slaughterhouse for it by the light of the candle on his forehead. He looked about everywhere to find it and, of course, he could not have looked at all if he had not had the light which he looked for already. Many a man is looking within himself to see the evidence of divine grace when his anxiety and the very light by which he looks ought to be sufficient evidence. I hope there are many of you who are just on the verge of salvation without knowing it. I looked last Friday night at a very remarkable sight, the burning of a huge rug factory. I was returning home from my Master's work, when I saw a little blaze, and in an incredibly short time a volume of fire rolled up in great masses to the skies! Why did it blaze so suddenly? Why, because for months before many men had been busily employed in hanging up the rugs, and saturating the building in combustible materials. I do not mean with the intention of starting a fire, but in the ordinary course of their work, and in due time, when the first spark came, it immediately grew into a great sheet of flames. So, sometimes, when the gospel is faithfully preached, a sinner gets present peace and pardon, and he is so full of joy his friends cannot make him out, his progress is so rapid. But remember that God has been mysteriously at work months before in that man's heart, preparing his soul to catch the heavenly flame, so that there was only a spark needed, and then up rolled the flames to heaven! Oh that I could be that spark to some heart in whom God has been working this morning, but HE alone can make me so. I noticed when that factory was on fire from top to bottom, that it seemed to glow like pure gold, or like transparent glass, and then I expected to see it fall, and by-and-by fall it did, for after about half-an-hour, all of a sudden, one timber went over and the whole mass fell with a tremendous crash!

I venture to compare that final crash with the actual salvation of a soul long prepared by God's grace to receive it. The heart has been glowing with a divine desire, a heavenly flame for even months and years, and then at last in a moment the final movement is made, and doubts and fears and sins fall to the ground, and there is room to build a temple for the living God. May it be so with you this morning! There has been much preparatory work in you, for you are brought to long after the Savior, and you are desirous to be saved by Him. There He is! Take Him! Take Him! The cup of water is put before you. Drink it! No need to wash your mouth first, or to change your garments. Drink it at once! Come to Jesus as you are!—

“Come and welcome, sinner, come!”

II. Oh that the Spirit of God would give me power from on high while I try to talk to the saints from the second case—that of the disciples in Luke 24:31. This is no Hagar, but “Cleopas and another disciple.” And yet these two suffered under the same spiritual blindness as Hagar, though not, of course, in the same phase of it. Carefully observe the case of these disciples, for I believe it is often our own. *They ought to have known Jesus* for these reasons. *They were acquainted with Him*, they had been with Him for years in public and in private, and they had heard His voice so often that they ought to have remembered its tones. They had gazed upon that marred face so frequently that they ought to have distinguished its features. They had been admitted into His privacy, and they ought to have known His habits. That Savior walking there ought not to have been *incognito* to them though He was to the rest of men.

So it is with us. Perhaps you have not found Jesus Christ lately. You have been to His table, and you have not met Him there; you are in a dark trouble this morning, and though He says, “It is I, be not afraid,” yet you cannot see Him there. Brothers and sisters, we ought to know Christ, we ought to discover Him at once. We know His voice, we have heard Him say, “Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.” We have looked into His face, we have understood the mystery of His grief, and we have leaned our head upon His bosom. Some of you have had an experience of 15 or 20 years, some of 40 or 50 years; and yet, though Christ is near, you do not know Him this morning, and you are saying, “Oh that I knew where I might find Him!”

They ought to have known Him because *He was close to them*. He was walking with them along the same road, he was not up on a mountain at a distance. Even then they ought to have known Him, for He was there in the same way with them; and at this hour Jesus is very near to us, sympathizing with all our griefs—

***“In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has His part.”***

He bears and endures with us still, though now exalted on glory’s Throne in heaven. If He is here, we ought to know Him. If He is close to His people every day, and in their affliction is afflicted, we ought to perceive Him. Oh, what poor vision is this, that Christ should be near, our own well-beloved Redeemer, and yet we should not be able to detect His presence!

They ought to have seen Him because *they had the Scriptures to reflect His image*, and yet how possible it is for us to open that precious Book and turn over page after page of it, and not see Christ. They talked concerning Christ from Moses to the end of the prophets, and yet they did not see Jesus. Dear child of God, are you in that state? He feeds among the lilies of the Word, and you are among those lilies, and yet you do not see Him. He is accustomed to walk through the glades of Scripture and to commune with His people, as the Father did with Adam in the cool of the day, and yet you are in the Garden of Scripture but cannot see your Lord, though He is there and is never absent. What is more, these disciples ought to have seen Jesus, *for they had the Scriptures opened to them*. They not only heard the Word, but they understood it. I am sure they understood it, *for their hearts burned within them* while He spoke with them by the way. I have known what it is, and so have you, to feel our hearts burn when we have been thinking of the precious truth of God, and yet we have said, “Oh that I could get at Him!” You have heard of election, and you have wondered to yourself whether you should ever see again the face of God’s first elect one. You have heard of the atonement, and the mournful story of the cross has ravished you, but you have gone from page to page of Scripture doctrine, and have received it and felt its influence, and yet that best of all enjoyments, communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, you have not comfortably possessed. There was another reason why the disciples ought to have seen Him, namely that *they had received testimonies from others about Him*. “But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yes, and certain women of our company, which were early at the sepulcher, made us astonished, for when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive.” There He was close to them. Oh, it is so strange that in the ordinances of God’s house Jesus should be there, and yet in sad intervals our hearts should get so cold and so worldly that we cannot see Him. It is a blessed thing to want to see Him, but oh, it is better still to see Him. To those who seek Him He is sweet; but to those who find Him, He is dear beyond expression. In the prayer meeting you have heard some say, “If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now,” and your hearts burned within you as they thus spoke, and yet you could not say the same yourself. You have been up in the sick-chamber, and you have heard the dying saint sing—

***“I will love You in life, I will love You in death,
And praise You as long as You lend me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”***

You have envied that dying saint because you could not just then feel the same confident love; well this is strange, passing strange, it is amazing—a present Savior, present with His own disciples who

have long known Him, and who long to see Him, and yet their eyes are shut so that they cannot discover Him. Why do we not see Him? I think it must be ascribed in our case to the same as in theirs, namely, *our unbelief*. They evidently did not expect to see Him, and therefore they did not discover Him. Brothers and sisters, to a great extent in spiritual things we shall get what we expect. The ordinary preacher of the gospel does not expect to see present conversions, and he does not; but there are certain brothers I have known who have preached with the full faith that God would convert souls, and souls have been converted. Some saints do not expect to see Christ. They read the life of Madame Guyon, and her soul-enchanting hymns, and they say, "Ah, this was a blessed woman." They take down the letters of Samuel Rutherford, and when they read them through, they say, "Enchanting epistles! A strange, marvelously good man was this." It does not enter into their heads that they may be as Madam Guyon, and that they may have as much nearness to Christ, and as much enjoyment as Samuel Rutherford. We have got into the habit of thinking the saints gone by stand up in elevated niches for us to stare at them with solemn awe, and fancy that we can never attain to their elevation. Brothers and sisters, they are elevated, certainly, but they beckon us to follow them, and point to a something beyond! They invite us to outstrip them, to get greater nearness to Christ, a clearer sense of His love, and a more ravishing enjoyment of His presence. You do not expect to see Christ, and therefore you do not see Him, not because He is not there to be seen, but because your eyes are shut through your unbelief! I do not know any reason why we should not be full of joy this morning; every believing soul among us. Why hang those harps on the willows, beloved? You have a trial, you say. Yes, but Jesus is in it! He says, "When you pass through the rivers, I will be with you, the floods shall not overflow you." Why not rejoice then, since the dear Shepherd is with you? What matters it though there are clouds? They are full of rain when He is there, and they shall empty themselves upon the earth. Up, my brothers and sisters, up! With everything that may discourage and cast you down, you have 10 times as much to encourage and lift you up! He loved you, and gave Himself for you; His blood has cleansed you; His righteousness has clothed you; His grace has decked you with jewels. This world and the world to come are yours, and Christ who is better than both worlds is yours forever and ever! Take down those harps and strike the strings with glad fingers, and wake them into melodies of joy!

Now, dear friends, I am sure it is the duty of every Christian, as well as his privilege, to walk in the conscious enjoyment of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ; and it may be that you came here on purpose that you might begin such a walk. The disciples had walked a long way without knowing Christ, but when they sat at His table, it was the breaking of bread that broke the evil charm, and they saw Jesus clearly at once. Do not neglect that precious ordinance of the breaking of bread! There is much more in it than some suppose. Sometimes when the preaching of the Word affords no joy, the breaking of bread might—and when reading the Word does not yield consolation, a resort to the Lord's Table might be the means of comfort. It may even happen that some other neglected means may be that which God intends to bless to your soul. I am afraid many of God's servants are in darkness because they have neglected known duties. The windows of Christ's palace are many, and He would not have one of them blocked up; and if you block up one window, it may be that He will say, "I will never show My face at any but that. I will make My servants take down that shutter, that the Light of God may shine through." There is nothing in any ordinance of itself, but there may be much sin in your neglecting it. There is nothing, for instance, in the ordinance of believers' baptism, and yet, knowing it to be a prescribed duty in God's Word, it may be that the Lord will never give you a comfortable sense of His presence till you yield to your conscience in that matter. But, waiving all that point, what you need is to see Him! Faith alone can bring you to see Him. Make it your prayer this morning, "Lord, open my eyes that I may see my Savior present with me, and after once seeing Him may I never let Him go. From this day forth may I begin, like Enoch, to walk with You, and may I continue walking with You till I die, that I may then dwell with You forever." I find it very easy to get near to God compared with what it is to stay near. Enoch walked with God 400 years; what a long walk that was! What a splendid journey through life! Why should you not begin, dear Christian brothers and sisters, today, if you have not begun, and walk with God through the few years which remain?

What if God should spare you for 40 years? I do not see that there is any necessity that your communion with God should be broken from now till death or the Lord's coming. "Yes," you say, "you talk in a Utopian fashion!" Perhaps I do, but I believe that high-toned Christian experience is to a great extent what common Christians think to be out of their reach. Oh to get up above yon mists which dim the valley! Oh to climb the mountain's top which laughs in the sunlight! Oh to get away from the heavy atmosphere of worldliness and doubt, of fear, of care, of fretfulness—to soar away from the worldlings who are always earth-hunting, digging into its mines, and prying after its treasures—and to get up there where God dwells in the innermost circle of heavenly seclusion, to get where none can live but men who have been quickened from among the dead; where none can walk but men who are crucified with Christ, and who live only in Him. Oh to get up there where no more questions concerning our security can molest us; where no carking care can disturb because all is cast upon the Lord and rests wholly with Him! Oh to live in such an entireness of confidence and child-like faith that we will have nothing to do with anything except with serving Him and showing forth the gratitude we owe to Him who has done so much for us! Get up, believers! Get up to your high mountain! Leave your dunghills and assume your thrones! Cast off your sackcloth! Throw away your ashes and put on your scarlet apparel! Christ has called you to fellowship with Himself, and He is no longer in the grave—He is risen! Rise! He is ascended! Ascend with Him and learn what this means, "He has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! I know you will say you cannot see this. However, it is there, most surely there! It is just the same as in Hagar's case, with you, the same but with a difference. The fullness of fellowship with Christ is attainable, is close to you, and if you have your eyes opened to see it, as it has been given you to see Jesus as your Savior, you may rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. God do so to you and more also according to His covenant goodness in Christ Jesus. Amen and Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—GENESIS 21:9-19; LUKE 24:13-31

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